

WE CLAIM:

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1. In a computer system having a graphical user interface including a display, a method comprising the steps of:

receiving a video signal;

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displaying the video signal on the display;

receiving text communications from one or more viewers of the video signal, the text communications being related to the video signal; and

displaying the received text communications on the display with the video

~~signal~~

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2. The method of claim 1, wherein the video signal is displayed in a video region of the display and the text communications are displayed in a chat region of the display.

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3. The method of claim 2, wherein the chat region of the display is adjacent the video region of the display.

4. The method of claim 2, wherein the chat region of the display overlies the video region of the display.

5 Suba²⁷ 5. The method of claim 2, wherein an identifying characteristic of the video signal is displayed outside of the video region of the display.

Sub (B1) 6. The method of claim 5, wherein the identifying characteristic identifies an episode of a television series included in the video signal.

7. The method of claim 5, wherein the identifying characteristic identifies a television series corresponding to the video signal.

8. The method of claim 5, wherein the identifying characteristic identifies a television network affiliate providing the video signal.

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9. The method of claim 5, wherein the identifying characteristic identifies a television network providing the video signal.

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10. The method of claim 5, wherein the identifying characteristic includes a background underlying other displayed data.

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11. The method of claim 1 which further comprises the steps of:
determining an identifying characteristic of the video signal; and
defining a user interface for display of the text communications, the user interface being configured to reflect the identifying characteristic of the video signal.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein the user interface includes a predefined chat region for display of the text communications.

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13. The method of claim 12, wherein the user interface includes a predefined video region for display of the video signal.

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14. In an entertainment system which includes a graphical user interface for presentation on a display, a method comprising the steps of:

receiving a broadcast video signal from a broadcast signal source;

displaying the broadcast video signal in a video region of the display;

5 receiving text communications from a chat source different from the broadcast signal source, the text communications including text from two or more viewers of the broadcast video signal, and the text communications being related to the broadcast video signal; and

displaying the received text communications in a chat region of the display, the text communications being displayed on the display with the broadcast video signal.

15. The method of claim 14, wherein the chat region of the display is adjacent the video region of the display.

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16. The method of claim 14, wherein the chat region of the display overlies the video region of the display.

17. The method of claim 14, wherein an identifying characteristic of the broadcast video signal is displayed outside of the video region of the display.

5 18. The method of claim 14 which further comprises the steps of:
determining an identifying characteristic of the broadcast video signal; and
selecting a user interface template which defines a video region for display
of the broadcast video signal, a chat region for display of the text communications from
the chat source, and a logo region for display of a logo which reflects the identifying
characteristic of the broadcast video signal.

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15 19. The method of claim 18, wherein the identifying characteristic identifies a broadcast network, network affiliate, television show or episode of the broadcast video signal.

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20. A graphical user interface for presentation on a display device, the graphical user interface comprising:

a video region of the display for presentation of a video program having an identifying characteristic; and

5 a chat region of the display for real-time presentation of text communications between viewers of the video program during viewing of the video program, wherein the appearance of the graphical user interface outside the video region is determined at least in part by an identifying characteristic of the video program.

21. The graphical user interface of claim 20, wherein the chat region of the display is adjacent the video region of the display.

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22. The graphical user interface of claim 20, wherein the chat region of the display overlies the video region of the display.

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23. The graphical user interface of claim 20, wherein the identifying characteristic is a television series episode.

24. The graphical user interface of claim 20, wherein the identifying characteristic is a television series.

5 *Sub* 25. The graphical user interface of claim 20, wherein the identifying characteristic is a television network affiliate which broadcasts the video program.

10 26. The graphical user interface of claim 20, wherein the identifying characteristic is a television network which broadcasts the video program.

15 *Sub* 27. The graphical user interface of claim 20, wherein the identifying characteristic is used to determine a background over which other information is displayed.

28. A method for presentation of information on a display screen of a computer system, the method comprising the steps of:

receiving a video program from a program source;

presenting the video program in a video region of the display screen;

presenting a chat option for selection by a program viewer; and

upon selection of the chat option, providing for text communications between the program viewer and other program viewers over a communications network, and presenting the text communications in a chat region of the display screen.

29. The method of claim 28, wherein the step of providing for text communications between the program viewer and other program viewers includes defining a chat room in a chat server, the chat room having a chat room identity based on a unique program identifier of the video program.

30. The method of claim 28, wherein the step of providing for text communications between the program viewer and other program viewers includes:

communicating selection of the chat option to a web server for determination of a chat room identity;

5 receiving the chat room identity from the web server; and

communicating the chat room identity to a chat server for use in defining a chat room in the chat server, the chat room serving as a communication link between program viewers.

31. The method of claim 30, wherein the step of communicating selection of the chat option involves communicating a unique program identifier of the video program to the web server.

32. The method of claim 31, wherein the chat room identity is a predetermined variant of the unique program identifier.

33. The method of claim 28 which further comprises:
determining an identifying characteristic of the video program; and
defining a background for a portion of a user interface which reflects the
identifying characteristic of the video program.

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34. The method of claim 33, wherein the identifying characteristic
identifies an episode of a television series.

35. The method of claim 33, wherein the identifying characteristic
identifies a television series.

36. The method of claim 33, wherein the identifying characteristic
identifies a television network affiliate providing the video program.

37. The method of claim 33, wherein the identifying characteristic
identifies a television network providing the video signal.

38. The method of claim 28, further comprising the following steps after conclusion of the video program:

receiving a second video program from the program source;

presenting the second video program on the video region;

5 presenting a second chat option for selection by the program viewer; and

upon selection of the second chat option, providing for text communications between the program viewer and other program viewers of the second video program over a communications network, and presenting the text communications in a chat region of the display screen.

39. The method of claim 28, wherein the chat option is presented only during receipt of the video program from the program source.

40. The method of claim 28 which further comprises the step of interrupting text communications between program viewers upon conclusion of the video program.

Sub 97/41. An entertainment system for use in supplementing video programming with interactive text communications for concurrent presentation on a video display, the entertainment system comprising:

5 a control unit configured to receive video programming for presentation on the display, and to present a chat option on the display for selection by a program viewer; and

10 a server arrangement configured to communicate with the control unit upon selection of the chat option for identification of the video programming, the server arrangement further being configured to determine a chat room identity based on the identified video programming and to communicate text communications within the identified chat room to the control unit for presentation on the video display concurrently with the video programming.

15 42. The entertainment system of claim 41, wherein the server arrangement includes:

20 a web server in communication with the control unit to receive a video program identity from the control unit and to determine a video-program-based chat room identity for transmission to the control unit; and

a chat server configured to establish the identified chat room and to communicate text communications within the identified chat room to the control unit for presentation on the video display.

43. The entertainment system of claim 42, wherein the web server is further configured to determine an identifying characteristic of the video programming, and to define a user interface based, at least in part, on the identifying characteristic of the ~~video program~~.

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44. The entertainment system of claim 43, wherein the identifying characteristic identifies an episode of a television series.

45. The entertainment system of claim 43, wherein the identifying characteristic identifies a television series.

46. The entertainment system of claim 43, wherein the identifying characteristic identifies a television network affiliate providing the video programming.

47. The entertainment system of claim 43, wherein the identifying characteristic identifies a television network providing the video programming.

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48. The entertainment system of claim 41, wherein the video programming has a beginning and an end, the control unit being configured to direct program viewers to a subsequent chat room upon reaching the end of the video programming.

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49. The entertainment system of claim 48, wherein the subsequent chat room has a chat room identity based on subsequent video programming.

50. In an entertainment system including a video display configured to present video programming from a video program source and to present text communications from a chat room of a chat server, a control unit comprising:

a video receiver configured to receive a video program for presentation on the video display, and configured to receive a unique program identifier of the video program for selection of a chat room based on the unique program identifier; and

a browser device in communication with the video receiver to identify the selected chat room, the browser device being configured to communicate with the selected chat room and to present text communications occurring within the selected chat room on the video display concurrently with the video program.

51. The entertainment system of claim 50, wherein the browser device is further in communication with a web server to receive a chat background which reflects an identifying characteristic of the video program.

52. The entertainment system of claim 51, wherein the identifying characteristic identifies an episode of a television series.

53. The entertainment system of claim 51, wherein the identifying characteristic identifies a television series.

54. The entertainment system of claim 51, wherein the identifying characteristic identifies a television network affiliate providing the video programming.

55. The control unit of claim 51, wherein the identifying characteristic identifies a television network providing the video program.

56. The control unit of claim 50, wherein the video program has a beginning and an end, the browser device being configured to direct program viewers to a subsequent chat room upon reaching the end of the video program.

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57. The control unit of claim 56, wherein the subsequent chat room has a chat room identity based on a subsequent video program identity.

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